Case Study

Hillary Clinton & Partners: Leading Global Social Change from the US State Department
**Introduction**

Creating systemic change in society can be very complex, and often a daunting and challenging task. A vital role of leaders who initiate change involves communicating imagined futures, inspiring others to their vision, and strategically developing a plan to drive the desired change. A global perspective of social change requires a collective effort of cross-sector actors to work collaboratively to solve issues of poverty, empowerment, human dignity, and the environment.

*Hillary Clinton and Partners: Leading Global Social Change from the US State Department by Kanter and Malone (2012)* details the leadership of the United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Appointed by President Barrack Obama in 2009, Clinton led the State Department during a time when the United States was rebuilding its reputation through international diplomacy. Secretary Clinton—contending with regional inequities—sought robust solutions to global crises through a network of collaborative partners from the US government, foreign governments, world leaders, private corporations, and NGOs.

This analysis first examines the contextual basis—the situation that influenced the actions of Secretary of State Clinton—when new realities required creative models of partnerships. Second, the inquiry examines Clinton’s leadership during a time of agency realignment geared toward solving regional issues of social justice. Lastly, it explores how a collaborative network of partners changed the ability to solve transnational problems. The analysis concludes with the relevance of the theories and concepts put forth, as well as recommendations.

**Summary: Contextual Base of Analysis**

In 2009, Clinton was appointed by President Obama to serve as the 67th Secretary of State. As the head of the State Department, Clinton was the chief foreign affairs advisor responsible for managing foreign relations and implementing the President’s foreign policies. “The mission of the State Department is to create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the
American people and the international community” (Kanter & Malone, 2012).

During her tenure at the helm of the State Department, Clinton was able to build on her prior years of public service. She served as the First Lady of the United States (1993 to 2001) and as a United States Senator from New York (2001 to 2009) (Kanter & Malone, 2012). During her time as First Lady, Clinton spoke vividly about solving global issues collaboratively, as the scope of the problems were too vast for any one sector to tackle on its own. As a US Senator, she forged partnerships between farmers and proprietors, developing markets for her state’s produce growers. At the State Department, Clinton continued her pursuit of public-private partnerships to solve pressing global issues, and created the Secretary’s office of Global Partnership Initiative.

The Secretary’s office of Global Partnership Initiative was created to forge collaborations—crossing regions and sectors—to solve transnational problems while promoting opportunity and improving lives. Clinton’s reputation and name were prominent. She enjoyed high levels of social capital and clout in all the right circles. As Secretary of State, she was the most traveled of all her predecessors, visiting over 100 countries. She represented the United States during challenging times abroad, interacting with Heads of State regarding Libya, Egypt, Syria, and other countries in the Middle East. As a catalyst of change, Clinton sought global partnerships implemented through the State Department as the platform for her initiatives.

After naming her long-time colleague—Kris Balderson—to head the office Global Partnership Initiative, they pursued innovative solutions to solve global issues. They leveraged market forces and strategic partnerships to advance their cause. Clinton pursued new modes of operating that critics alluded to as speech ready mantra with no practical application. Through the use of internal teams, and external public-private partnerships, she realigned standard practices at the State Department.

Utilizing the new methodology she had deployed within the State Department, Clinton’s office
put forth many global initiatives rooted in foreign policy and linked to national defense, diplomacy, empowerment, economic development, and the environment. Partners for a New Beginning (PNB), initiated by the State Department in 2010, focused on improving relations throughout the Middle East. In 2012, Clinton introduced Accelerating Market Driven Partnerships (AMP). This initiative was driven by cross-sector actors emphasizing impact investing. AMP based investments evaluated not only profit, but how global communities and the environment would be impacted.

Larger scale public-private partnerships initiated by Clinton were The Global Initiative for Clean Cookstoves (GICC) and the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA). The GICC was driven in response to environmental and social factors. The toxic emission from the traditional modes of cooking in third world countries killed millions of women and children annually. Clinton and team, building on a failed attempt by the EPA in 2002, leveraged public-private partnerships to empower women, address environmental concerns, and economically develop poor countries by advancing the cookstove initiative globally. IdEA brought diaspora groups to the table and advanced economic growth, diplomacy, and entrepreneur spirit. Clinton’s ability to bring nontraditional players to the table aided her ability to solve regional problems.

**Analysis: Applicable Leadership Theories and Concepts**

*Concepts of Leadership.* Two leadership theories that describe Clinton are transformational and strategic leadership, both of which contain essential elements—a visionary leader and a focus on organizational change (Hickman, 2010; Shea, 2013). Within complex organizational settings, those in leadership roles may use a myriad of leadership styles to affect change (Hickman, 2010). Transformational leadership—of which change is its primary focus—inspires, engages, and empowers followers. Transformational theories posit that vision and new processes are essential (Gill, 2011; O’Brien & Shea, 2010; Schmid, 2010; Van Wart, 2011).
Focused on solving global issues, while enhancing the United States diplomacy efforts around the world, Clinton sought robust change and revolutionized the dynamics of public-private partnerships. Her willingness to try new problem solving approaches within the State Department, while empowering others in the process, exemplifies her transformational style (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Clinton challenged long-standing traditional processes and enabled others to act. She was able to inspire others to share her vision during her time as the U.S. top diplomat, tried new ideas, stimulated collaborative networks, and brought people into the process who had traditionally been left out.

Clinton created a work environment where staff felt empowered—their opinions and participation were encouraged (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Schaettii et al (2009) assert that transformational leaders elicit creativity and develop leadership capacity in colleagues. This was explicit in Clinton’s ability to creatively form internal teams who identified problems, then took on the task to build partnerships to solve them. Furthermore, she was able to cultivate internal leaders—Kris Balderson and Jacob Moss—who in turn recruited other leaders from various federal agencies to collaborate on projects. Through her transformational style, Clinton empowered others to act on her behalf and share in her vision.

Strategic leadership is characterized by the development and execution of an organization’s plan. The leader initiates change, sets goals, and develops new products or processes (Hickman, 2010). Once appointed to head the State Department, Clinton pledged to utilize public-private partnerships, initiated collaborative teams in her department, and created the office of Global Partnership Initiative—all geared toward stimulating change, protecting the environment, empowering women, building diplomacy, and promoting health and humanity globally (Kanter & Malone, 2012).
Strategic leadership creates effective partnership and alliances, assesses the organization’s strengths and weaknesses, has an understanding of where the organization needs to be, and formulates a strategy to get there (Dym & Hutson, 2005; Hickman, 2010; Ruchwar, 2012). Clinton understood that the problems facing our world are too large in scale for any one sector to resolve individually. She created new models of partnerships bringing in leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. An example of this was the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, which had over 400 partners ranging from academia, foundations, government, consultants, and the private sector (Kanter & Malone, 2012).

Aligned with both strategic and transformational leadership, appreciative inquiry seeks new perceptions of the organization and contains both pragmatic and visionary elements (Bushe, 1998; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Appreciative Inquiry is a positive lens to examine an organization’s resources. As an organizational change practice, it focuses on the positive assets of the organization and resides in in the principle of “creating something meaningful,” by virtue of aligning the organizations strengths (Cooperrider, n.d.; Hickman, 2010).

Clinton understood the role of the State Department in the world. It was clear that her positional authority and the department’s prominence were strengths of which she could build on. Moreover, she had brought many people to the State Department who had worked with her when she was the First Lady and a U.S. Senator. These long-time colleagues would be a valuable asset to help her get buy-in from career civil servants, and ease the implementation of her agenda. As such, she pursued internal collaborations, as well as external public-private partnerships to solve global issues. Clinton was able to build on the strengths of the State Department and accomplish what other federal agencies had failed to do in the past. Clinton created positive meaningful solutions with plausible results as she focused on the assets of the State Department.
**Concepts of Change.** Teleological theory is an organizational change theory in which the level of analysis rests within one organization or group. The process of change is emergent and embraces goal setting, implementation, evaluation, modification, and setting new goals post evaluation if necessary. Change is enacted purposefully and guided by the organization’s goals toward a desired outcome (Hickman, 2010). It is accomplished with transformational and strategic leadership, appreciative inquiry, and emphasizes new veracities as a result of the intentional change process (Hickman, 2010).

Clinton was appointed as the Secretary of State during a time when the U.S. reputation was tarnished. After an initial assessment, she developed unique ways in which to respond to the turbulent and dynamic environment—multiple crises in the Middle East and global issues of poverty, empowerment, and human rights. She produced the “first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) where she included partnerships as the State Department’s new mode of operating” (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Clinton’s creation of internal collaborative teams at state, as well as external public-private partnerships, was a teleological change that Hickman (2010) would describe as “second order (a break from the past)”.

Government workers are typically entrenched in standard work procedures, as they realize the swing of political appointees is not permanent. Clinton’s ability to get buy-in, moving from traditional methods to collaborative teams within her department, as well as the new modes defined in QDDR demonstrates teleological change. Internal teams were not only charged with identifying problems and advancing programs internally to engineer solutions—a task they’ve always done—they were now charged with forging public-private partnerships to facilitate a joint solution with the State Department geared toward solving regional issues (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Clinton’s time in government had taught her that solving problems required strategic partners and collaboration.
Change Practices. Leading global change is multifaceted. The complexity not only rests with the scope of the problem, but requires cultural competencies, cultural adaptability, and a vast array of collaborators unifying around joint solutions (Higgins & Hulvert, 2013). The emphasis of collaborative networks is on solving public problems and creating public value (Ricucci, 2010). Although Ricucci’s focus was on local and national problems, the intent of his definition is applicable to the regional change efforts of the State Department. Clinton’s leadership intentionally sought organizational realignment to tackle problems in the global context. Although Clinton held a formal position of authority at the State Department, within the horizontal network of partners her leadership was referent.

Hickman (2010) contends the purpose of global change is “to address large-scale transnational problems and create new opportunities”. The strategic leadership of Clinton formed collaborative networks of public-private partnerships that coalesced around global issues of empowerment, humanity, poverty, economic growth, and the environment. Concepts of global leadership encompass a vast array of ideas, but focus on the interactions of entities involved in the change process (Hickman, 2014).

Through the use of network-based solutions, Clinton’s methods spurred others to do their part and take ownership in change process. This analysis further examines the collaborative network Secretary Clinton formed through her office of Global Partnership Initiative—the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves—through the lens of global leadership. Relevant global leadership components for cross-boundary change include transcending, inclusive, and convening (Hickman, 2010).

Two transcending components of global leadership useful for this analysis are: (1) Appeal to Common Humanity and (2) Broadened Identity and Vision. Both of these components of transcending leadership signify a key element of recognizing our common humanity. Leaders shape a
vision which link together people and groups that work to improve the lives of others while adding meaning to their own (Hickman, 2010). An Inclusive component of global leadership is to unite different sectors and stakeholders. Collaborations that link together governments, and the private and nonprofit sectors, allow for diverse expertise, and contribute to solve global crises. Stakeholders take responsibility and ownership of solutions, and use their talents accordingly (Hickman, 2010). A convening component utilizes “power to invite and attract parties” (Hickman, 2010). This entails the power to attract collaborators from a leader’s formal position within an institution and allows them to invite others to share their vision.

Clinton and her team used statistics—the number of deaths caused by traditional cookstoves throughout the world—to garner support from other federal agencies. Through this method, Clinton was able to bring federal agencies together to solve a global issue based on the tenets of transcending leadership—recognizing our common humanity. She engaged agency heads from within the federal government “appealing to their desire to make a difference in something that could have a great global impact on humanity” (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Secretary Clinton and the State Department’s utilization of inclusive components were explicit in their ability to form a mass network of partners. The partnerships—over 400—spanned foreign governments, NGO’s, UN Agencies, and the private sector, all uniting to improve human life, empower women, and protect the environment through their cookstove initiative (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Clinton’s name recognition and positional authority in government gave the State Department the ability to attract players to the table, form partnerships, and pursue the goals of the cookstove initiative. She reached out to foreign leaders to “adopt policies and encourage the use of clean cookstoves” (Kanter & Malone, 2012). Hickman (2010) would define this as a convening component of global leadership.
Cultural competencies and cultural adaptability are essential components for collaborations to successfully solve transnational issues. A critical element is the ability to understand the breadth of the culture and have the skills to adapt to the differences (Gupta, 2009; Schaetti et al, 2009). The Global Cookstove Alliance held feedback sessions in fifteen countries prior to its implementation in order to gain indispensable knowledge of the different cultures. This allowed the alliance to put forth a meaningful strategic plan prior to implementation (Kanter & Malone, 2012).

The use of horizontal networks and experience, as well as ethical practices, are relevant global change practices defining the Clean Cookstove Initiative. Adler (1997) contends that cross-sector, boundary spanning, collaborations enable leaders to develop a diverse perspective (in Hickman, 2010). An element of ethical practices is reciprocal care. Reciprocal care embraces the ethos of creating communities in which human dignity and welfare are the focal point (Hickman, 2010). Both of the aforementioned change practices were deployed in the cookstove initiative. As the UN Foundation took the lead management role in the collaboration, they sent teams to Guatemala to build on their feedback session previously held in other countries.

Their experience in Guatemala enhanced their perspective. Experiencing the toxic smoke first hand made them realize just how dangerous it was, and they came to understand that Guatemalans did not know the toxic smoke was dangerous. The experience enhanced their ability and cultural competencies two-fold. First came the realization that they had to do more than just install the stoves; they had to educate the communities regarding the dangers of the traditional stoves. Second, they learned from interviewing the women that the new cookstove brought families together—an important aspect of the culture—and that women felt more feminine since the new cookstoves did not leave them smelling like smoke. Signifying their commitment to individual dignity and welfare of
individuals—an ethical perspective—they engaged the Guatemalans, attended to their needs, and developed trusting relationships.

The collaboration was initiated by Clinton and the State Department, yet as the formation of public-private partnerships emerged leadership was dispersed. The scope of a global crisis is too vast, requiring collaborations of public-private partnerships. This is reinforced by Higgins and Hulvert (2013) who claim solving complex problems necessitates a collective approach in which all stakeholders are engaged in the process.

**Relevance of Concepts for Analysis**

The concepts for analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how Secretary Clinton’s leadership sparked a collaborative approach to solving regional problems. The concepts of transformational and strategic leadership, appreciate inquiry, and teleological theory allowed for an in-depth understanding of how Clinton’s leadership realigned the State Department to advance humanity and empower communities spanning the globe. Examining the global change that took place demonstrates the usefulness of public-private partnerships for large scale, culturally diverse, transnational problems. Furthermore, it exhibited how an individual with formal authority in one context may only have referent authority in another as change crosses the organization and moves into the global context.

**Recommendation**

It would be useful for Clinton and the State Department to build on its experience in the cookstove initiative, leveraging their social capital, to mobilize high level national governments and donors to expand their efforts to other global trouble spots. Second, the State Department should build a permanent framework that is sustainable as the political pendulums swings from liberal to conservative ideology, maintaining the use of public-private partnerships to improve humanity.
gLOBALLY. FURTHERMORE, SINCE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE AN EXPENSIVE ENDEAVOR, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR BY INCENTIVIZING THEIR EFFORT TOWARD GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT.

Conclusion

During Clinton’s reign at the State Department she utilized new modalities of practice. The creation of the office of Global Partnership Initiative embraced the State Department’s use of public-private partnerships to increase its breadth of confronting global challenges. Clinton reached out to foreign governments and world leaders to adopt policies to improve humanity, the environment, public health, and empower women in the developing world. The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves Initiative exemplifies the use of public-private partnerships to solve regional issues and highlights the change process in the global context.

Clinton’s leadership style is best described as transformational and strategic, which support the teleological change that took place within the State Department. The complexity of solving global crises requires cultural competencies, cultural adaptability, and a vast array of collaborators unifying around joint solutions. The leadership theories and concepts explored in this analysis demonstrate how a compilation of leadership styles can influence outcomes and a leader’s effectiveness.
References


